

Defective Eyesight. By Dr. D. B. St. John Roosa. Pp. ix + 186. (New York: The Macmillan Co. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

DR. ROOSA'S book is pleasantly written and easy to follow, but it is not very clear what particular place in ophthalmic literature the book is intended to occupy. From the superficial manner in which each subject is treated it would appear to be intended for the instruction of the junior student.

But a student's manual on the refraction of the eye in which no mention is made of retinoscopy, and the ophthalmoscope is only casually referred to as being unnecessary in most refraction cases, is certainly somewhat incomplete.

Most people will agree with Dr. Roosa in condemning the permanent wearing of prisms in the treatment of heterophoria. But the statement that want of balance of the external ocular muscles never causes asthenopic symptoms, is contrary to the experience of the majority of ophthalmologists.

We thoroughly endorse the author's views as to the practical value of the ophthalmometer, though he overstates the case when he says that, to a competent observer, no mistake is possible in the estimation of astigmatism with this instrument. Those who have used both ophthalmometric and other methods with the same patient, in any considerable number of cases, will agree with Adolphe Javal, jun., that corneal astigmatism often differs from the total astigmatism by 0.5 to 0.75 dioptre.

The Lancashire Sea Fisheries. By Charles L. Jackson, M.I.C.E., &c. Pp. viii + 85. (Manchester: Heywood and Son, 1899.)

THIS is a reprint of a lecture delivered in the Chadwick Museum, apparently under the auspices of the Bolton Corporation. It is full of obvious inaccuracies, is hopelessly out of date, and contains on nearly every page cheap sneers at "pure science" and "the scientists," as opposed to the "business" and "practical men." There is a good deal about "Dame Nature" and "Old Ocean," and "the Great Author of the Universe," with whom the author of the book seems to be on curiously confidential terms. This is a work which, if taken seriously, is calculated, we fear, to do much harm—not to the County Council against whose labours it is directed, but to the fishermen in whose interests it professes to be written—by stirring up bad feeling, class prejudices, and opposition to constituted authority.

A Country Schoolmaster, James Shaw, of Tynron, Dumfriesshire. Edited by Robert Wallace. Pp. xcvi + 392. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

WE have first a sketch of the life and work of James Shaw; but the bulk of the book is occupied with reprints of some of his more characteristic literary productions. These are upon a great variety of subjects, mostly connected with natural history. The early years of James Shaw's life were spent as a pattern designer and calico printer, and it was not till he was over thirty years of age that he became the schoolmaster at Tynron, a country parish in Dumfriesshire. He continued there for thirty-four years. In the early part of his career his tastes were chiefly literary, and he acquired considerable power as a writer both of prose and verse. After he became a country schoolmaster he devoted himself entirely to natural history and archæology. His papers collected in the present volume are of real interest, and charmingly written. After looking through them we feel the justice of his friend's remark: "Shaw was a large man, fated to play out his life-drama on a small and dimly-lighted stage."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

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Apparent Dark Lightning Flashes.

LAST night during a thunderstorm of rare severity in which brilliant flashes—single, double, triple, or quadruple—followed one another at intervals often of not more than a few seconds of time, I was surprised to see with great vividness, on a suddenly illuminated sky, two nearly vertical lines of darkness, each of the ordinary jagged appearance of a bright flash of lightning. I remembered to have seen two real flashes of just the same shapes and relative positions, and I concluded that the black flashes were due to their residual influence on the retina. I turned my eyes quickly from the dark sky outside to an illuminated wall inside the house, and I again saw the same double dark "flash," which verified my conclusion in an interesting manner. The fatigued part of the eye failed to perceive the sudden brightness of the sky in the one case and of the wall in the other.

Aix-les-Bains, August 7.

KELVIN.

MEETING OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AT PORTSMOUTH.

A GOODLY number of members of this pre-eminent practical Association journeyed last week to Portsmouth to be present at the sixty-seventh annual meeting. The place of meeting was not so attractive as last year, and perhaps on this account the attendance was somewhat smaller. The subject-matter, however, at Portsmouth was quite as interesting as that at Edinburgh; and those who, braving almost tropical heat, were diligent in their attendance at the meetings got their reward, and will return home with ample food for thought.

After an eloquent and interesting address from the President, Dr. Ward Cousins, in which a sketch was given of the progress made in medicine and surgery during the present century, the meeting divided itself up into sections, and settled down to work.

Section of Medicine.—An address on medicine was delivered by Sir Richard Douglas Powell, his subject being recent advances in practical medicine. Under this heading various points of practical interest were discussed. The use of the binaural stethoscope received some attention, the author somewhat deploring the decadence of the old rigid stethoscope, a flexible instrument being incapable of transmitting tactile impulses. Under the head of "Anomalous Fevers," Sir Richard discussed shortly the important subject of mixed infection. The value of what was said on serum therapy was enhanced by the addition of a table indicating the actions of the various sera. Under the "Prevention and Treatment of Tuberculosis" the vexed question of the influence of heredity was considered, the author apparently attaching more importance to this influence than recent investigations would seem to justify. The address concluded with a few suggestive hints concerning a possible parasitic existence of the tubercle bacillus.

At the opening of the section, the President, Dr. Mitchell Bruce, made a few introductory remarks with regard to the subjects of discussion, viz. the tests for admission into the public services, and Tuberculosis. Sir Dyce Duckworth's paper upon the former subject, in his unavoidable absence, was read by the President. The paper comprised a valuable critique of the methods of examination at present adopted by the public services, and a consideration of the causes and rejection of defective candidates. An animated discussion followed this paper. Prof. Osler advocated that the physical examination of candidates should take place earlier in the course of their training, and alluded to the more common causes of, according to him, unnecessary

rejection. Dr. Wallace discussed the matter from a civil standpoint, and advised the forming of a definite standard of physical fitness. Dr. W. Turner drew attention to the mental condition of candidates, and to the not uncommon occurrence of insanity during active service. The result of the discussion was that the following resolutions were sent up to the Council with a request that they be submitted to the War Office: (1) That the physical examination should precede the educational; (2) that soldiers should not serve in the tropics till twenty-two; (3) that the question of the physical standard should receive reconsideration.

A number of papers, which provoked some discussion, upon the ever-present subject of uric acid and gout followed.

Section of Surgery.—An address in surgery was delivered by Dr. Ogston, the medical services of the army and navy forming the subject. The author dealt at length with the unsatisfactory condition of the services, both from the point of view of the medical man and the soldier. During the last three decades the class of medical man aspiring to enter the services has very much depreciated, a fact greatly to be deplored. Further, the medical services are undermanned, and there is a want of adequate training. The Indian Medical Service is, to some extent, an exception, and offers many more advantages than the army and navy. The author indicated generally some lines of remedy for the present regrettable condition of the medical services, and contrasted the methods used by the authorities here with those used abroad, notably in Germany, Russia and France.

The president of the section, Mr. Butlin, delivered a short address on the work of the section. The two special subjects for discussion in this section were (1) the diagnosis and treatment of gunshot wounds of the abdomen, and (2) the prevention and treatment of syphilis in the army and navy.

Section of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.—The President of this section, Dr. Granville Bantock, delivered an address in which he urged that in gynaecological cases a more conservative attitude might be adopted, and that a diminution in the number of operations performed might with benefit to the patients take place.

An interesting discussion subsequently took place upon fever following delivery, with special reference to serum therapy. The discussion was opened with a paper by Dr. Herbert Spencer. With regard to the serum treatment the author remarked that a large number of observations had now been made upon this subject, 350 cases having been collected by a committee of the American Gynaecological Society. Among these cases there was a mortality of 33 per cent., but the natural mortality of the diseases was probably not greater than this. Little more can be said for this treatment in this class of case than that it somewhat ameliorates the severity of the disease.

Section of State Medicine.—Dr. George Wilson delivered the presidential address in this section. The author discussed the relation of bacteriological research and methods to preventive medicine.

Section of Psychology.—Dr. Nicolson dealt with the interesting question of the reproachable differences of medical opinion in lunacy cases, and whether they could be avoided. Differences of opinion among medical men were not uncommon in (1) ordinary lunacy cases, (2) civil cases, (3) non-capital criminal cases, and (4) capital criminal cases. In the case of criminal cases, malingering formed a most puzzling element. The author laid stress upon the fact that, although anthropological measurements afforded very valuable information and were to be encouraged as likely in the future to be capable of formulating rules of value, too much stress with regard to individual cases should not be

placed upon them. An active discussion followed this paper.

Section of Anatomy and Physiology.—The presidential address in this section was delivered by Dr. Charles. The lecturer dealt with the advancement which had recently been made in physiology. He noticed with pleasure that now in this country physiology numbered amongst her votaries a number of accomplished organisers and able laboratory workers, and that we had not now to reproach ourselves with neglecting what Du Bois Reymond rightly called the queen of the natural sciences.

Mr. Stanley Boyd read a paper on the interaction between the ovaries and the mammary glands. This interaction, he remarked, in the cases of removal of both ovaries caused an apparent subsidence and retrogression of cancerous growths in the breast.

Section of Pathology.—Dr. Payne delivered the presidential address in this section. A discussion followed upon ulcerative endocarditis.

Section of Pharmacology and Therapeutics.—The President, Dr. Bradbury, in opening the work of this section, referred to the difficulty in fixing the place of pharmacology in the medical curriculum. He considered an accurate knowledge of pharmacology to be essential to the practitioner of medicine.

The work of the section began with a paper by Dr. Lauder Brunton on headaches. The paper contained a mass of valuable and interesting information, and comprised a consideration of the rôle played by vaso-motor changes in the causation of headaches, and also that played by toxæmic conditions and errors of refraction. The treatments of the different forms of headache were considered, and many useful hints as regards their prevention were given. A discussion followed. Upon replying, Dr. Brunton mentioned that altitudes and depths probably produced headaches by altering the atmospheric pressure in the sinuses.

Section of Laryngology and Otology.—The President, Mr. Creswell Baber, delivered an address on the progress of rhinology during the last thirty years.

The section of Tropical Diseases was well attended. Dr. George Thin gave an able address, in which he referred to recent researches on the extra corporeal life of the malarial parasites. The President, after having regretted the unavoidable absence of Major Ross, began to discuss the teaching of tropical medicine. The author dwelt at some length upon the advantages of Netley as affording more material than any other institution for the teaching of tropical medicine, and showed diagrams comparing Netley with London and Liverpool as regards the number of patients available for instruction. According to the author, the advantages possessed by Netley were very great, especially with regard to hepatitis and hepatic abscess.

The museum of the Association, always a prominent feature of the annual meetings, was well filled with exhibits, and was much patronised by members.

Nunquam animus motu vacuus est. Absolute rest is a myth of the consulting room often prescribed but rarely practised. It, along with the Salisbury diet and other things, is what one expects of one's friends but not of oneself. The hard-working medical man doubtless wants absolute rest badly enough, but by prefixing his holiday with an attendance at the annual British Medical Association meeting he acts wisely. There work is so mixed up with pleasure that one passes almost insensibly from the one to the other, the meetings forming as it were an intermediate region between work and holiday, shading off the contrast between the two, making the loss of constant occupation less acute, and helping one to slip easily into the *dolce far niente* which one has earned so well.

F. W. TUNNICLIFFE.